Children and Young People RIKE Network Strategy 2021-2025

March 2021

Background

The Children and Young People Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (RIKE) Network is one of (currently) six Oxford Brookes University networks which bring together staff from across the University with a shared interest and expertise in specific themes/areas. The RIKE Networks contribute to the delivery of the Research and Innovation Pillar of the University Strategy. The Children and Young People (CYP) Network was launched internally in January 2019 and now has around 100 members from across all faculties. This first strategy for the CYP Network sets out our values, aims and objectives for the next five years.

Introduction

The members of the Children and Young People Network share a common aspiration: to contribute to research and knowledge-building that will ultimately lead to improving children's and young people's opportunities, experiences and outcomes.

We recognise that the early stages of life – from conception, through birth, schooling, further and higher education and into early adulthood – offer both immense opportunities and huge challenges. This is especially the case in an era of rapid sociocultural, socio-economic, technological and environmental change and of deep-seated and intersecting inequalities. Climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, racism and gender inequalities, conflict, migration, violence, economic instability and the gig economy all powerfully affect children's and young people's lives and wellbeing, and threaten their ability to fulfil their potential.

Rooted in a recognition of the immense diversity in the lives of children and young people, our research responds to an urgent need to better understand those lives from multiple perspectives, and to explore and identify ways of supporting children and young people as they negotiate the challenges, transitions and opportunities of these vital phases of their development.

We conduct research locally, nationally and internationally, and examine how the contexts, cultures and spaces in which children and young people live, learn, play and work impact on their health, development and identity. This includes the opportunities and risks afforded by the digital and physical environments, the effects of discourses about children and young people, and the impact of broader social, economic, educational and health inequalities. Our research examines aspects of health and wellbeing – including physical and mental health, lifestyles, disease and risky behaviours, (prevention measures and interventions). We also

investigate children's and young people's academic, cognitive and social development and learning and their identities, as well as atypical development and disabilities. The research agenda also includes: youth in conflict zones and displacement; transitions from education into employment; gender inequalities; histories of childhood; children's and young people's entrepreneurship, and their engagement with the arts and with research itself.

At Oxford Brookes University, we have strong partnerships with education, health, social care and third sector providers in our local community. The Network brings a wealth of established clinical, vocational and professional expertise which offers synergies with practice and policy, locally, nationally and internationally. We also recognise the importance of collaborating with children and young people themselves to set our research agenda and, where appropriate, to co-produce research.

Purpose and aims of the Children and Young People Network

The purpose of the Network is to develop collaborative working relationships within, across and beyond the University and to create opportunities for high quality research, innovation and knowledge exchange. By bringing together staff from all faculties who contribute to the Children and Young People agenda and knowledge base, and stakeholders – local, national and international – including children and young people themselves, we seek to address the following four overarching **aims**:

- **To strengthen multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research relating to children and young people, across the University and beyond.**
- **To strengthen knowledge exchange relating to children and young people within and outside the University.**
- **To impact positively on children's and young people's opportunities, experiences and outcomes, through our influence on policy, practice, knowledge and discourse in a range of settings locally, nationally and internationally.**
- **To raise the profile of the University as a world-class research institution contributing to the agenda on children and young people.**

Wider context

A focus on children and young people cuts across many major sectors and themes in society across the globe. The United Nations (UN) 17 ambitious Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The UN World Youth Report emphasises the critical role of young people in the implementation of this agenda, with a particular focus on youth education and employment. Furthermore, the WHO recognises the importance of Engaging Young People for health and sustainable development. In its education strategy Every Child Learns, UNICEF challenges governments, communities and development partners to rethink how they manage and support education systems, with a focus on 'the breadth of skills that allow young people to become agile, adaptive learners and citizens, equipped to navigate personal, social, academic, economic and environmental challenges'.

Nationally, the NHS Long Term Plan includes many areas of work related to CYP. This includes Starting well (to 'give every child the best start in life possible, from birth to their transition into adulthood'). Locally, Oxford City Council's Children & Young People's Strategy guides local service development and delivery with a vision 'that every child and young person can fulfil their potential and become happy, safe, successful, healthy and active citizens'. Youth are central to our University setting, with our vision to 'equip people with the skills, knowledge, mind-set, and attributes required to face new challenges and thrive in a complex, uncertain world'.

Our values

The CYP Network values align with Oxford Brookes' Guiding Principles:

Inclusivity
Our research actively works towards reducing inequalities that affect the capabilities, freedoms, opportunities, experiences and outcomes of children and young people. We appreciate that the diverse experiences and needs of children and young people call for a broad range of research methodologies, including person-centred and co-produced approaches.

Confidence
Our cutting-edge research generates important new knowledge, understanding and theory that have the potential to transform children's and young people's lives. We recognise that collaboration allows for effective cross-fertilisation of knowledge and ways of knowing, theories and methodological approaches, and a sharing of expertise, time and resources. Collaboration is key to our confidence as researchers and our ability to secure funding and bring our research findings to a wider audience.

Enterprising Creativity
We aspire to conduct innovative research, knowledge exchange, dissemination and impact activities that respond to both longstanding and emerging challenges facing children and young people.

Connectedness
We recognise the importance of our connections both within and beyond the Network and the University. We seek out opportunities to work with children and young people, local communities, provider services, industry, policy makers and academic partners to identify challenges and opportunities and to deliver evidence-based practices and real-world impact.

Generosity of Spirit.
We take seriously our responsibility to champion both the interests and agency of children and young people. We strive to create a generous and inclusive research environment that attracts and nurtures people who share our values and contribute their expertise to our agenda.

CYP Network Strategy 2021 - 2025

Each of our four aims has objectives, actions to achieve those, and key performance indicators which allow us to monitor our success in the delivery of those objectives in the short and medium term. The Steering Group will receive regular reports on activity put in place to deliver these objectives and annual reports on performance against the KPIs. For further information, please see the CYP Network Action Plan, available from cypnetwork@brookes.ac.uk.

Aims and Objectives

1. **To strengthen multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research relating to children and young people, across the University and beyond, we will:**

    1.1. create opportunities and mechanisms to support Network members in identifying and developing collaborations both within and outside the University;
    1.2. share information about innovative and successful research practices, including co-produced and open research that meets the highest standards of reproducibility and ethical integrity;
    1.3. disseminate information about relevant funding opportunities, and coordinate multi-disciplinary/interdisciplinary bids as appropriate;

2. **To strengthen knowledge exchange relating to children and young people within and outside the University, we will:**

    2.1. organise and/or promote events (academic and non-academic, with internal and external audiences) which showcase the work of Network members and enable two-way communication and engagement;
    2.2. disseminate information about knowledge exchange events organised by other groups across and beyond the University;
    2.3. develop strategies to ensure that the priorities of internal and external stakeholders are reflected in the strategic direction of the Network.

3. **To impact positively on children's and young people's opportunities, experiences and outcomes, through our influence on policy, practice, knowledge and discourse in a range of settings locally, nationally and internationally, we will:**

    3.1. encourage impactful research through sharing good practice, including impact case studies;
    3.2. foster and support effective and ethical collaborations and engagement with key external stakeholders in this agenda at a local, regional, national and international level;
    3.3. develop varied routes to disseminating research findings and contributing our expertise, both within and outside academia.

4. **To raise the profile of the University as a world-class research institution contributing to the agenda on children and young people, we will:**

   4.1. ensure that the work, expertise and impact of the CYP Network and its members are visible across key communication channels, including the University website and mainstream and social media, with easily-found, clear and current information;

   4.2. identify and promote opportunities for CYP network members to contribute to policy consultations, independent reviews, public engagement events and academic conferences on local, national and international levels;

   4.3. host high-profile events such as academic conferences and public engagement activities.

Review

This strategy will be reviewed by the Steering Group annually.

Date of next review: March 2022